

# DHAMMA in the Enrichment of one's LIFE

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### DHAMMA in the Enrichment of one's LIFE No. 1

## Human Life And Its Samsāric Continuance

*Professor Dhammavihari Thera*

In Buddhism, as a system of religious culture, we are primarily interested in the life of humans. We believe that these humans whom we see around us have come into existence, evolving through a long process, across time and space. This is what we Buddhists refer to as *samsāra*, describing it sometimes as a long journey.

*Taṇhādutiyo puriso dīgham addhāna saṃsaram  
itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ saṃsāram nātivattati.*

Sn. v. 740

Man who has craving as his constant companion,  
trailing along the far-stretching highway,  
shall never get beyond Samsāra  
which produces this life and yet another and another.

Translated by the author

We shall also always keep in mind the vital *Dhamma* statement which comes to us from the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [MN. II. 68] which emphasizes that as a religious discipline, Buddhism does not fall back on any divinity or divine power as a source of protection to whom we go in prayer and make supplications [*attāno*]. Nor do we turn towards any such controller [*anabhissaro*] who presides over our lives and determines our future.

At the same time we must make it clear that when we lay this particular emphasis here on humans, it is not that we lack interest in life forms besides human. We look upon all forms of life with love and respect. It is in our head and heart that all living things should enjoy happiness and security: *sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* [Sn. v. 145]. We also know and do believe, with today's top ranking scientists like Paul Davies, in extra-terrestrial life. That is those who could possibly be living somewhere in outer space, may be in other planets. At the same time we admit, and that too with the biologists of today, the need for us to respect and safeguard the entire ecosystem in its totality which includes both animal and plant life. More and more books on this aspect of thinking which are of world standard, like Biophilia Hypothesis [Ed. Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, 1993] continue to be written year after year.

Now let us take a look at Buddhist thinking about this cosmic vastness of life. For instance, note how the Metta Sutta [Suttanipāta vv. 145-7], covers this entire range of life of man and animal without any tinge of personal arrogance or self-interest. It speaks of the large, small and minute in size [*dīghā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā rassakā aṇukathulā*], of those seen or are beyond our visibility [*diṭṭhā vā ye ca addiṭṭhā*], of those living near or afar [*ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre*]. All life coming under this vast range are to be enabled to live in comfort and security [*Sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*. loc. cit.]. Buddhism looks upon it as the bounden duty of us humans to provide it.

What is interesting in our Buddhist thinking is that we are called upon to provide this security, not by mere prayer or wishful thinking, but by our very mode of living. The Metta Sutta is very precise when it prescribes this mode to us as [*byārosanā paṭighasaññā nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya ... evam'pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam* loc.cit.]. This means that neither in our anger nor in moods of hostility, we shall ever wish ill of another. So shall we develop infinite love towards all beings. Remember that all these instructions come to us from the above quoted Metta Sutta.

Deriving out of this kind of thinking, it has to be our belief and our conviction as Buddhists, that we humans have no right whatsoever to destroy any form of life in the world we live in, neither for self-preservation nor for self-sustenance. Buddhists should be awakened to the position that we are even forbidden to endorse such activity [*Na cā' nujaññā hanatam paresam* at Sn. v. 394]. The saner world today does not believe that there can be any divine sanctions, religion wise, for this sort of high-handed behavior, against any segment of life in the world, however small or insignificant one may personally deem them to be. Nor can any other source of power or authority be invoked in defense of such activity, neither via ethnic or cultural identities nor in terms of political ideologies, as is the ever recurrent global policy in the world today. Somebody's sanity has to be called in question ! No matter where our ill-founded loyalties lie.

The emergence of new vegetarian movements even in the western world of Judeo-Christian belief lends evidence for this new line of saner and sober thinking. It is time that Buddhist Sri Lanka awakens from its self-imposed long-drawn slumber to this new reality, to this new wave of magnanimous thinking, now emerging almost globally in America, Australia and in many parts of Europe. This is a challenge against the slaughter of animals to feed gluttonous humans, to clothe them luxuriously with silks and furs and to provide easy ways to acquire other human needs like fats and oils by the too well-known scandalous slaughter of whales and sharks. Have we Sri Lankans ever known books like Diet for a

Small Planet by Frances M. Lappe or Beyond Beef / Breakdown of the Cattle Culture by Jeremy Rifkin or Animal Liberation by Peter Singer, written in the Western world decades ago?

The main theme of the Metta Sutta is to inculcate such a loving humanitarian outlook towards all living things in the world. It emphatically says that it has to be like the love of a mother towards her only child whom she guards at the risk even of her own life [*mātā yathā niyam puttam āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe evam 'pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam bhāvaye aparimānaṃ*. loc.cit.]. Let it be understood by every one, any where and every where, that the Metta Sutta of the Buddhists is not meant merely for chanting to allay fears, or cure diseases. Or for blessing people of all ages on their birthdays, even *in absentia*.

This sutta is meant for people who have any sense in their heads, for putting life on this earth on proper gear [*karaṇīyam attha-kusalena* loc. cit.]. What should they endeavor to do or to be? The sutta provides a basic answer, insisting on one's personal efficiency and skill [*sakko*], honesty and integrity [*ujū ca sūjū ca*], pleasantness in speech [*suvaco*: note that *suvaco* is by no means obedience.], affability [*mudu*] and finally modesty and humility [*anatimānī*]. What a wonderful recipe for the acquisition of a basic culture for decent and respectable living in the world.

The sutta also promises the possibility of transcendental achievements, i.e. in bringing about the liberation of the human from his *samsāric* continuance [*na hi jātu gabbha-seyyam punar 'eti ' ti*. loc. cit.]. Here the sutta presents the development of hostility-reducing loving kindness or *mettā* in one's own heart, within oneself, as a basis for one's own spiritual ascent. This is by no means for the increase of material comforts in one's day to day living. Hear the Buddha himself telling his young son Rahula who was a disciple under him that he who develops *mettā* eliminates the evil quality of hostility or *vyāpāda* within oneself.

This certainly is not the newly emerging *mantra*-like *mettā bhāvanā* or well-

wishing directed towards others via the power of the virtues of the Buddha like *araham*, evolving a new formula which reads *bhagavato arahā guṇa-tejena sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*. This appears to us to be no more than giving away in charity what one picks out of others' pockets. Wherein does self-development which is needed for self-liberation take place?

Since we are discussing in this essay the utility value of the *dhamma*, I ask myself at this stage as to whom we do endeavor to re-educate on these issues, the preachers of the *dhamma* or those who piously listen to them. Let me stress once again at this stage that enrichment of human life, and that for self-liberation out of Samsāra, is the spirit in which all teachings of Buddhism are promulgated. It is such true enrichment in an edifying way, at down-to-earth level, which makes transcendence possible.

We shall now focus attention specifically on our major theme, namely enrichment of human life, here and now. This we have to do with an unfailing awareness of how it contributes to the attainment of the desired goal of *Nibbāna*. Let us now face the concept of Nirvana as the final termination of the irksome and painful continuance in *samsāra*. This is referred to as running along -- *sandhāvati samsarati*. In Nirvana, we are told, the wheel of life shall roll along no more -- *yattha vaṭṭam na vaṭṭati*. Journeying in *Samsāra* comes to a final halt - *nāparam itthattāyā ' ti pajānāti*.

We also know from our authentic Buddhist texts that continuance of beings in *samsāra* is because of their being blinded by ignorance [*avijjā-nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ*] and bound by craving which is generated through our responses to the stimuli from the world [*taṇhā-samyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ samsarataṃ*. SN. II. 178].

If this is what we are, blinded by ignorance and bound by craving as laymen in the world, what then do we do to correct ourselves? Our trouble begins at the time we begin to communicate with the world. We are stimulated and enticed

through our sense organs. We are seduced to gratify our sensory demands. Man being by nature a pleasure seeker, but one without adequate judgement, invariably gets into serious difficulties in the fulfillment of these sensory demands. In this area, man often over steps limits of propriety, social justice and even basic human rights. It is lamentable that in many vital social groups in Sri Lanka, like the home and the school, religious considerations get only a very secondary place. What are paraded as religious considerations are absolutely impoverished and far flung out side the orbit of religion.

The Buddha makes it known that what we call in our life gratification of sense desires provides only a very limited amount of pleasure. The emphasis is on the fact they are relatively of no real worth. The Buddha has repeatedly said so: *appassādā kāmā vuttā bhagavatā*. But the pain and misery that comes in the wake of pursuing pleasure are disproportionately overwhelming: *bahudukkhā bahu-upāyāsā*. The Buddha aspirant, i.e. the *Bodhisatta*, had an adequately clarified vision of this sort about the world, well before his enlightenment [*Pubbe' va me abhisambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass 'eva sato etadahosi*. SN. II. 5].

It is through this pre-enlightenment vision that he felt the need to search for a way out [*nissaraṇa*] from all these ills of life like decay, disease and death [*kudā 'ssu nāma imassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nissaraṇam paññāyissati jarāmaraṇassā ' ti. loc. cit.*]. These words, on account of their paramount importance, have later come to be associated even with the legendary Buddhas of the past, from Buddha Dīpaṅkara downwards [loc. cit.].

It is out of such a search that what we today call the *dhamma* emerged. *Dhamma* is Buddhism's message to mankind to regulate and discipline their lives, in order that they may not run into stresses and strains which humans have to go through in their day to day living. He who lives in accordance with the *dhamma* is said to be safeguarded and protected by the *dhamma* [*dhammo have*

*rakkhati dhammacāriṃ* - Thag. v. 303]. Well-lived *dhamma* brings happiness in its wake [*dhammo suciṅṅo sukham āvahāti* - Ibid.]. These are all rewards of *dhamma*-living which one does visibly harvest in this very life. On departing from here, one shall not, on account of the good *dhamma*-life one has lived, descend in one's next life to a lower degraded state [*na duggatiṃ gacchati dhammacārī* - Ibid.]. Such states of degeneracy after death are what the Buddhists call hells and are severally referred to as *apāya niraya duggati* or *vinipāta*. It may be anything like being born even as an animal.

It is to avoid such disasters which may, to begin with, be no more than very basic situations arising out of disagreements and not so serious incompatibilities, here and now as we live our day to day lives, that we must seek the assistance of the *dhamma*. In the hands of unskilled persons who have hardly had any impact of the *dhamma*, persons who are very correctly called 'not learned in the *dhamma*' or *assutavā puthujjana*, these situations in our homes and among our families do develop into ravaging storms of the scale of typhoons. Then they tear down family relationships, good will among friends etc. *Dhamma* indeed gives us that necessary insight into the origin of such disturbances. In Sri Lanka today, we are too full of such disasters, of breakdown of almost everything around us. It is so in the home. Life in the schools is disrupted. It is calamitously bad at the level of universities. This disorder and lawlessness has today spread even to religious institutions.

Take a good look at our society in Sri Lanka today, whether it be in the home, school or work place. In the home, with well thought out planning, our communities thrived on the basis of marriage, new family units being set up with blessings of parents on both sides. In days of old, in spite of not infrequent strained in-law relations, marriages survived the storms without going on the rocks. Marriage, among the Buddhists, was and has to be a sacred institution as we all know, in spite of the Buddhist monk not tying the nuptial knot or signing the marriage register.

We Buddhists have very little need of sacraments. Let Buddhists and non-Buddhists world over know that the very solid foundation for marriage was laid, with unassailable sociological insight, by the Buddha himself. After careful scrutiny, anybody and everybody can benefit by accepting them, if they choose to. Humans are humans. We need something more than the law of the jungle. Unmarried mothers and fatherless children in the animal world can freely roam and get about in the jungle.

But the Buddha, preaching to a world of humans, who at the time he was preaching in India stood well above the high-water mark of human culture, and that in marked contrast to the industrially-super grade world of today, indicated two basic ingredients for the successful set up of a marriage. They are i. conjugal fidelity and ii. harmonious and healthy in-law relationships. These indeed must make marriage taste better, and enduringly satisfying, at every stage, early or late.

Let us now take a clearer view of the context in which the Buddha came to announce to the world, without any doubt for the first time in human history, these enlightening ideas leading to the uplift of woman in society. Courageously he told the world: Some women are capable of rising well above many a man [*Itthī 'pi hi ekacciyā seyyā posā janādhīpa* - SN. I. 86]. They are the wise and virtuous among them [*medhāvinī sīlavatī* - loc.cit], who also respect conjugal fidelity in marriage and dutifully venerate their in-law parents [*sassu-devā patibbatā* - loc. cit.].

The Buddha uttered these words of wisdom to King Pasenadī of Kosala himself who being a product of his time, had to be enlightened on these feminist issues [SN. I. 86]. Are we not aware today of, or are we trying to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to, the alarming increase of wrecked marriages in Sri Lanka which result from such domestic maladjustment. They have their origin in untutored candidates seeking ill-considered romantic marriages. The invariable



consequences of these are severely damaging divorces, leaving young men and women in shambles and others ending up in tragic suicides. These shall remain grim reminders for all times that we need basic lessons in the education of men and women for life.

Taking marriage as the first step in the establishment of a happy home and successful family life, we are hopeful that these basic lessons from the *dhamma*, addressed to mankind as a whole, will contribute in some measure to the enrichment of human life on earth, here and now.



**DHAMMA in the Enrichment of one's LIFE. No. 2**

## **Kamma as Action and Reaction**

### **How and Where it Operates**

*Professor Dhammavihari Thera*

In my first sermon in this series sometime ago, I stressed the importance of adequately taking care, here and now, of the life into which we are born. Buddhism concedes the possibility of different grades of life, both above and below the human, in which one can find oneself on the termination of the present one. It depends entirely on one's character, i.e. the mode of behavior one indulges in through thought, word and deed, while being a human. Remember that is where you and I are in at present. The very meaningful phrase in which this idea is expressed in Buddhist texts is *yathābhataṃ evaṃ nikkhitto* = delivered into a state of existence hereafter, in accordance with what one has done.

This makes us accept the present life we are now in as the outcome of a long

process of activity, dating back infinitely. This idea of activity which underlies the Buddhist theory of *kamma* [or *karman* in Sanskrit] is fundamentally significant because it is essentially founded on the basis of motivation or *cetanā*. Derived from the Pali root / cit [ceteti, cintayati] to think, *cetanā* means thinking, willing, intending. Therefore the Buddhist definition of *kamma* is *cetanā 'ham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*. It means: "I declare *kamma* to be willed or thought out action."

In the process of committing *kamma*, the willing to do or the intending to do is said to be generally based on three roots of motivation. We being human as we are, these motivations are, effortlessly, on the unwholesome side. From the spiritual or religious side of human elevation or edification for the sake of liberation from *Samsāra*, these are looked upon as unskillful or *akusala*. These motivations are three in number, viz. greed to acquire and possess through self-interest [*lobhā*], hatred or desire to eliminate for the same reason of self-interest [*dosa*] and resultant delusion [*moha*]. In other words they are referred to as 'roots of evil' or *akusala-mūla*.

Therefore such *kamma* which are born out of these roots of evil are bound to produce *samsāra*-prolonging and *dukkha*-generating corrosive evil results or *akusala-vipāka*. The wish to terminate *dukkha*, the Buddha himself is reported to be declaring, cannot be successfully achieved without wearing off or expiating [*appaṭisaṃvidivā*] the ill effects of these willed and consciously committed *karmic* actions. Sometimes, the expression purge oneself of is used to refer to this process. The Buddha's comments in the texts read as follows: *Nā'ham bhikkhave sañceta-nikānaṃ kammānaṃ katānaṃ upacitānaṃ appaṭisaṃvidivā vyantī-bhāvaṃ vadāmi. Tañ ca kho diṭṭh'eva dhamme upapajje vā apare vā pariyāye.* AN. V. 292 .

In this context, Buddhists have two important issues to reckon with. Number one is that, viewing from all reasonable angles, life of humans in the world is fraught with multiple situations of displeasure, discomfort, as well as of anxiety,

stress and strain which affect us in both areas of body and mind, to a greater or lesser degree. These are also accepted in Buddhism as products of our own maladjustment. That is, they are own creations through thought, word and deed in responding to the stimuli or challenges which the world keeps hurling at us all the time.

Number two is that the death of humans here does not bring about an end to or does not terminate this not very acceptable position. More than a facsimile of this life is going to be reproduced elsewhere, once again, at the termination of this life here. That is why we cannot in any way endorse an act of suicide, not even by one who believes himself to be a *sotāpanna* or stream-entrant. We have clearly pointed out elsewhere that this erroneous belief is the result of a gross misunderstanding of one single sentence in Pali in our Buddhist texts.

We are not going to undertake here answering questions as to the 'how, when and where' about being born again. We shall unhesitatingly do it elsewhere. But certainly it is on the acceptance of this fact of being born again that we undertake all these studies and all this preaching about Buddhism. Let us now come to the point that this entire process is set in motion by our own activity which is called *kamma* i.e. activity of each one of us severally. That is why we at times refer to *Nibbāna* as *kamma-kkhaya* or refer to the path leading to *Nibbāna* as *kamma-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*. Explaining this a bit further, our so-called *karmic*-activity of reacting to the stimuli of the world is referred to as grabbing or grasping and is technically referred to as *upādāna*. This *karmic*-activity of *upādāna* is said to build up our *samsāric*-continuity or *bhava* [*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*].

It is therefore time now to take a closer look at our own responses to the sense stimuli we get from the world outside or to our own lines of thinking from within via our built up life experience. It is well to be informed about the basic pattern of human reaction of being attracted or repelled [*anurodha-virodhaṃ*

*āpanno*] by the so-called attractive and the repulsive. On this basis, the human mind makes its own selection, based on its preconceived notions or its own mind-set. On the one hand, these preconceived notions are accumulated and structured in one life time, or on the other, even inherited from one's infinitely distant past by way of underlying tendencies called *āsaya* and *anusaya*.

All these, which are personally our own, invariably determine our life style. Buddhism's main instruction is to enable us to take this situation in hand. It is here that Buddhism reflects its fundamental character as a religion in that it insists on a great deal of discipline or *sikkhā* for personal self-correction. Buddhist religious culture, therefore, is one of personal responsibility [*attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā* - Dh. vv. 160, 380]. It is here that one has to be very discerning about the popular process of merit gathering through diverse processes of *pūjā* and *vandanā*, whether it be to or in the name of the Buddha, the Dhamma or the Sangha. If one can honestly see any justifiable degree of personal spiritual edification or exaltation brought about by them, i.e. reduction of greed, hatred and delusion, so far so good.

For this Buddhist process of self-culture or *sikkha*, we have already indicated that one needs a great deal of personal responsibility. Does the world today know a concept called responsibility? We shall take it up in due course. Those of the older generation in our midst today would recollect having studied the 3 R 's in our early school days. They were reading, w-riting and a-rithmetic. These, one must clearly remember, are skills we acquired at school, reasonably early in life. And they did prove useful. But as school-going children of the early thirties, that is more than seventy years ago, we learnt many more things outside the school curriculum.

We must not forget that in those days of yore, we also learnt good many things in the home. Those things that we learnt constituted our culture, i.e. qualities of head and heart which gave to our life in the community both a

smoothness and equally well a brilliance. We learnt what to do and what not to do. How to do and how not to do. This learning and this acquisition of habits came to us with ease and effortlessly. This learning was a joy to us and it was rewarding. We were applauded by those around us for what we did and how we did. Such a thing as juvenile delinquency was then hardly known. Much less spoken about.

All this learning came to us through the wisdom of persons of many generations, parents and grand parents of widely ranging age groups who constituted the home. How delightful has it been in our culture to hear and learn that our Great Master, the Buddha who subsequently came to be called the Teacher of Gods and Men [*satthā deva-manussānaṃ*] expressed the idea that the mother is the friend in one's home [*mātā mittam sake ghare*]. This is our cultural orientation. Who knows the truth of this today and who ever is capable of communicating this to another?

Once again, the Buddha as the promoter of a sound educational policy and an equally acceptable educational philosophy, said that parents in the home shall be the first instructors of their offspring [... *pubbācariyā' ti vuccare*]. But what a calamity that homes today are even less than single-parent homes. In our claimed-to-be Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka has any body ever felt the need to set up a Graduation School for Parenting? We do not mean here a structured institution like a Red Brick University with Chancellors and Vice Chancellors. But a mentally felt need for some responsible and competent people to guide our younger generation regarding the pre-requisites for being good parents. Or even more basically, being good wives and good husbands.

But with the lamentable breakdown of this life in the home, call it man-made or God-given, there has come about a devastating crumbling down of this human culture, particularly of the home-bred type, which is so vital for the continuance of humans on this earth. It is not a volcanic or cyclonic disaster. It is brought about

by men and women, through their reckless and headless thinking and acting.

Now to the concept of responsibility we spoke about above. We are glad that somebody somewhere has sensed this disastrous denudation of human values in the world today and are determined to introduce remedial measures. Not more than ten years ago we felt a breath of fresh air from a distant land far, far away whose identity we may, with honesty and courage, disclose as the U.S.A. While living in that part of the world at the time, we discovered that brave new thinking over there was making it clear that in the growth of a human into real solid stature, values are basically more important than prematurely acquired skills. So without much ado, the old 3 R's came to be, more or less, dumped in the garbage bin. The very vibrant new ones that replaced the old are Respect, Responsibility and Readiness to learn.

But lamentably in Sri Lanka today, the wiser Mums and Dads in the sophisticated homes, competing with the escalating skills-programs in the unidentifiably diverse types of schools in the country and the town, are misdirecting their less than teen-age children towards acquiring skills. We would more specifically say pre-mature skills. Children of even ten and eleven from reputed Colombo schools have told us that this is the shortest cut to earning quick money. We have discovered, and that for certain, that some of these lads are perishing with and within these new skills they are acquiring, pathologically heading even for nervous break-downs.

Taking up this grim reminder from a newly emerging culture in the world, let us Sri Lankans awaken to the disastrous disappearance of our own cultural heritage. The wiser men of any age, anywhere, knew their worth. All the new 3 R's mentioned above have been well-saddled in our religious culture of Buddhism for more than two millennia. Let us take up the very first concept of Respect. This is very well embedded in the Buddhist concept of *gāraṇa* which is included in the Maṅgala Sutta among its thirty eight success-generating items or

*maṅgalas*. Of the thousands who glamorously chant this sutta daily, more or less from roof tops, and the millions who listen below, how many know the cultural worth of the word *gāraṇa*? But we know today that many are entertained to tea and coffee within those sanctified premises, as a reward for listening in, by those who do the chanting.

We understand respect as a super-grade virtue of human relationships, emerging from the basic one of friendliness or *mettā*. Respect must come out of a qualitative recognition of merit in another, we believe, not necessarily implying seniority in age or position. It is, more or less, rendered as veneration of seniority, as for instance towards one's parents and teachers. This carefully calibrated virtue of veneration seems to apply not only to persons, but even to institutions. Respectful attitude to religious training or culture is referred to as *sikkhā-gāraṇatā*. This is a follow up of the respect for the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha as live and vibrant institutions, with a vitality of their own. But now it is being lowered to the veneration of mere objects like trees, statues and stupas. In this category also comes the acceptance and recognition of authority and established order like state law and social conventions and traditions.

We would consider it very important to point out in this context the significance of Buddhist concepts like *hiri* [sense of shame] and *ottappa* [sense of fear] which in any civilized society should command the respect of its membership. Its absence, Buddhist texts point out, would lead to social anarchy, ending up in scandalous sexual impropriety, humans behaving much worse than animals, as the books say.

The next concept which thinkers of the west now endeavor to introduce into society is responsibility. Like respect, they would like the concept of responsibility to get it into the school curriculum, so that humans commence their life in society with an awareness of this inestimably valuable virtue. Basically, it implies the awareness of one's accountability to what one does. It also implies one's

awareness of the obligations to all segments of society like parents, children etc. The Maṅgala Sutta to which we have already referred, enumerate them as attendance on one's parents [*mātā-pitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ*] and care of one's wife and children, etc. [*putta-dārassa saṅgaho*]. Buddhist texts go even further, indicating fair treatment of employees [*dāsa-kammakarā*].

The last of the 3 R's which form the basis of the new educational restructuring now emerging in the west is readiness to learn. In the ancient east, learning was primarily acquired through diligent listening in or *śruti*. It was through the medium of the ear. We have in the Pali language the word *assava* to which the Pali Dictionaries give the meaning docile. English Dictionaries explain docile as submissive. It is only as an archaic meaning they give teachable for docile.

But giving the word its more radical meaning, we would take *assava* to mean willingness or readiness to listen. It is this willingness to be taught and that necessarily via listening in which is the inherent pregnant meaning of the word *assava*. Therefore through more diligent listening came in more learning. And through more selected and well-judged learning there came wisdom which would be worthy of its name. Therefore in our eastern culture, the person who has heard much, i.e. the *bahussuta* came to be the one of commendable wisdom. That is also why in our Mangala Sutta, the possession of such wisdom or *bāhusacca* came to be listed among the *maṅgalas*, i.e. conditions which generate success.

Now if we take a quick look back at what we have said so far about the emerging new trends in education, primarily for the sake of retrieving the very foundations of our human culture which are fast getting eroded world over, we discover what a treasure house Buddhist teachings have been to mankind. It is part of the *dhamma* which the Buddha gave to mankind. Man has to be made a man with sanity of judgement in his head in order to be able to stand on his own



feet, with a dignity of his own, without kneeling before others in prayer, even to earn his daily bread. Man is also made to feel that he can win his liberation by his own effort.

He has also to learn to live in the world, with mutual respect for every segment of life in the world, man, bird and beast. Humans in no part of the world have a divine mandate to dominate over others. Or pray so ignobly for victory in battle to destroy those who are not identifiable with themselves. All disasters in the world today of wars, massacres, ethnic persecutions emerge basically from this witches' brew of religious arrogance and intolerance. Take a good look around and see it for yourself. It is you who need to act. Seek it not from others or elsewhere.



**DHAMMA in the Enrichment of one's LIFE. No. 3**

## **Face Dukkha and Look Out For Its Termination in Nirodha**

*Professor Dhammavihari Thera*

Let us begin today by meeting the Buddha and listening to him as to what he has to say about his life-time message to the world. This shall be your best form of *Buddhanussati*. Not merely gazing at his hands and feet. In a very specific statement to a disciple by the name of Anurādha, the Buddha says that at all times, then and now, he makes known to us the unsatisfactory nature of life in the world, i.e. *dukkha* and the possibility of its termination, i.e. *dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*. Listen to him yourself as the Master speaks: *Sādhū sādhū Anurādha pubbe c'āhaṃ anurādha etarahi ca dukkhañc'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodaṃ* [SN. III. 119]. In the Alagaddūpama suttā [MN.I.140], he says the same

to a congregation of monks. We consider this theme to be most central to the entire teaching of Buddhism.

This, we call the Buddha's life-time message to the world. Any of you, or may be many of you, our readers, have a right to give priority to any other portions you select out of his dhamma or even Abhidhamma as the most vital of his teachings. We give you complete freedom to do what you choose. It is only that we are old-time students of Buddhism who have learnt the dhamma in the historical way, with an awareness of early and lateness in time as the Buddha is seen expressing his ideas, or as later generations of disciples endeavor to explain his teachings from time to time.

From the very early days of his life, well before his enlightenment, at a time when he chooses to call himself only a *bodhisatta*, i.e. an aspirant to *bodhi* [*pubb'eva me abhisambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass' eva sato* - SN. II.104], he was conceiving this idea that all was not well with beings in the world [*kicchaṃ vatā 'yaṃ loko āpanno jāyati jīyati ca mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca*. loc.cit.].

Along with it also came to him the idea as to when an end to this could be found [... *kudā 'ssu nāma imassa dukkhassa nissaraṇam paññāyissati jarāmaraṇassā 'ti*. loc.cit.]. He made an honest endeavor in search of this, and in his enlightenment, he discovered it. This is precisely what he means when he makes his post-enlightenment assertion as the Buddha that what he preaches all the time is about *dukkha* and its termination or release therefrom, i.e. *nirodha*.

This immediately drives us to the inevitable conclusion that in talking about the four noble truths in Buddhism, one must historically see their genesis in these two basic items of *dukkha* and *nirodha*. It is in making a methodologically sound causal analysis of these two, that one arrives at the other two truths of *samudaya* as the cause of origin of *dukkha* and *magga* as the way leading to the contemplated cessation of it.

In talking about the *Bodhisatta's* ingenuity in the use of his causal analysis, one needs to be reminded here that its application is specifically to the problem of *samsāric* continuity of beings and its consequent ills. Note the way the questions are worded: *Kimhi nu kho sati jarāmarañam hoti kim paccayā jarāmarāṇan'ti*. [loc. cit.]. This is logically followed down the line along *nāmarūpa* and *viññāṇa* etc. It is for us Buddhists to note here that the Buddha's analytical approach is not to know how the scientists split the atom or how the Himalayan mountains came into existence. They were never the Buddha's concern.

One has to stop forthwith this bungling of tying up science and scientific knowledge with the spirit of Buddhist thinking. The Buddhists absolutely have no need to look for scientific proof for rebirth. The fact of the Buddha's enlightenment should be good enough evidence. The scientific methodology of Buddhism, if one is enamoured of associating such terms with Buddhism, is in the soundness of its own methodology of analysis and argument and not in being coupled with the content of science or its terminology. That being what it is, we have now seen the emergence of the Four Noble Truths as a vital component of the doctrinal corpus of Buddhism.

Its emergence and its vital integration within the spiritual culture and growth of the Buddhist, is something remarkably laudable. That is why it came to be enunciated in the very first sermon, the Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta, delivered by the Buddha to the world. History narrates it to us as being delivered by the Master to his five-fold group of monks who latterly came to be called the *pañcavaggiyā bhikkhū*. They were his erstwhile companions whom the Buddha selected as the best to whom he could deliver his first message of the *dhmma* which he had acquired after a great deal of trouble and tribulation. It is described in his own words as *kicchena me adhigataṃ* in the Ariyapariyesana Sutta [MN. I. 168].

But we are told that behind the curtain, while this remarkable performance

was being enacted in the Deer Park at Isipatana in Benares, on the full moon night in the month of July, more than a two and a half millennia ago, there were the extra-terrestrial beings of the ten thousand world systems, who applauded the Master on his performance. They are said to have firmly declared that his word shall never come to be challenged [*appativattiyaṃ* = irreversible] by any recluse or Brahmin or by any celestial being like a *deva* or Brahma or by any one any where [*samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā kena ci vā lokasmin ' ti*. SN. V. 423]. This means that the truth of what the Buddha declared as the Enlightened One shall for ever remain unassailable.

But I have my serious doubts whether any of you listeners have ever heard about this unique event in the recital of the Dhammacakka-ppavattana. What this unique appraisal by the *devas* meant. You know more and you speak more today about the heart-stirring [as they tell us in Sinhala *kā vadinna kiyanaṇā*] recitals of this sutta by a newly emerging generation of glamorous young reciters. But on the other hand, I have yet to find a correct rendering of this word *appativattiyaṃ* in the hands of Sinhala translators, monks or laymen, in Sri Lanka. They render it as "The Buddha did what nobody else could ever do."

Far from it. What it means is no more and no less than " the truth of what the Buddha declared as the Enlightened One shall for ever remain unassailable." This being so, we pray for the day of resurrection for Sri Lankan Buddhists when they shall be awakened to some of these real and rewarding truths of Buddhism which are lost to them today.

By now we have indicated to you via the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta that the main theme of Buddhism, both in theory and in practice, lies within the Four Noble Truths. Of these also, the genesis of the primary message, we have adequately explained, rests with the ideas of *dukkha* and its *nirodha*. If one does not fully comprehend this, honestly and truly, it is our very convinced opinion that no Buddhist would ever seriously contemplate on finding his way to Nirvana. Why

should one need be in such a hurry for that, the average Buddhist would challengingly ask us today. We would be silenced forthwith.

Way-side halting places like luxuriously built heavenly abodes at no cost to us worldly humans, on recommendations from here as it were, and enjoyment of affluence and abundance amidst the humans, all of which are listed and described without fail under *dev-minis sepa*, by well-meaning preachers of today, would attract them a great deal more. But they also hopefully keep one final tag on Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, and keep marking time for his arrival, in the belief that seeing him or hearing him preach would entitle them for entry into Nirvana. This makes a very credibly lovely parallel for the judgement day of the savior-centered theistic religions.

Be that what it may. We would now turn our attention to the teaching of the Four Noble Truths as the central theme of Buddhism which was dauntlessly and magnanimously preached to the world by our Buddha Gotama of the Sakya clan, and that two and a half millennia ago. Today, all schools of Buddhism, of China, Japan and Tibet, at least the heads of these institutions like his Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the late President Nivano of the Rissho Ho Sei Kai of Japan do accept Buddha Gotama, whom they refer to as Sakyamuni as the historical founder of this great religion.

But today, with the highly developed skills of marketing in the world, Sri Lankan agents are seen importing fascinatingly packaged new brands of Buddhism of the much later schools and marketing them here at very competitive affordable prices. It is widely known that the propa-gators of these new ideas and promoters of these new imports consist of clergy and laity of both sexes. We are not a bit surprised that Sri Lankans, knowing them as we do, take to these new products which are glamorously elitist and unquestionably fashionable, with ease and joy like ducks to water.

But the Four Noble Truths of our original Buddhism cannot be reduced to the

status of ladies' costume jewelry. They were made known to the world by the Buddha in his very first sermon of the Dhammacakkappavattana. But the poor Sri Lankans today are made to be enamoured of and be carried away more by its romanticized chanting. That in Sri Lanka today is really the carrot before the horse. That is where the highly commercialized cassette market is flourishing, no matter set in motion by whom. But any body who is keen on being a practicing Buddhist, let him mark the Buddha's own submission that he never claimed himself to be the Buddha till he in his own life, comprehended and acquired for himself the twelve-fold totality of these truths. More details of these in due course.

The very first of these truths, i.e. the *dukkha sacca*, is the one which pronounces the unmistakable nature of the world, i.e. of the humans and the world they live in. It is the unavoidable character of not being satisfactory which is associated with everything in the world, of persons, things, including the weather. It really means that we are not ready to adjust ourselves and be satisfied. Things of the world being conditionally brought about, keep constantly changing. We are not alert enough or quick enough to contain or accommodate this universal law of change or *anicca*. It is our failure to fall in line with it which brings grief or *dukkha* to us. The repeated life process of *samsāric* continuance makes *dukkha* tremendous and multi-dimensionally massive. Therefore it logically follows that the termination of the process of *samsāric* continuance brings about the termination of *dukkha*. This is where the wheel of life shall turn no more. *Yattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati.*

The Buddha, having told us the whole truth about *dukkha* and the possibility of its termination in *nirodha*, assists us further in indicating to us the primary cause from which *dukkha* originates. It is no more and no less than our mishandling of our very living process. To live is to be communicating with the world through our sense faculties. We respond every moment of our lives to what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears and so on. This is a ceaseless process,

while we are up and active and not fallen asleep.

One aspect of the truth about life is we believe that these responses, in our own judgement, make us happy. This process of sensory reaction make us grab at things, persons and situations which we believe give us happiness, comfort and joy. Are those of you who are regular patrons of meditation ever told about this erratic process of living which brings upon us all the disasters of *samsāric* continuance? There are three basic Pali words which you must necessarily learn in your meditation process which will help you out of this. They are *vedanā*, *taṇhā* and *upādāna*, occurring in the statement *vedanā paccayā taṇhā taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ*.

Let us now learn these anew. *Vedanā* in Buddhist thinking is basically cognitive awareness or getting to know about the world through our sense faculties like the eye and the ear. It is not pain as pleasant, unpleasant etc. That is a secondary derivative meaning. Because we are not correctly tutored in the Buddhist way, at least by well paid private tutors, about the basics of *anicca dukkha* and *anatta*, we incorrectly assess our sense data in terms of our likes and dislikes, i.e. what we see and what we hear, and in our greed or *lobha*, decide to own and appropriate them, or in our hatred and dislike or *dosa*, decide to eliminate and destroy them.

At this stage of responding to our sense stimuli which the world keeps hurling at us all the time, why are we Buddhists not correctly tutored by our learned masters to meaningfully utilize the concept of *tilakkhaṇa* or *anicca dukkha anatta* collectively to view the world in its true reality? This alone will eliminate or reduce the process of grabbing [i.e. *upādāna*] through unwarranted thirsting [i.e. *taṇhā*]. This real Buddhist process of self-culture, call it *bhāvanā*, meditation or whatever else you like, is referred to in our reliably authentic texts as *tilakkhaṇaṃ ropetvā vaḍḍhetī* which means 'culture our minds in terms of the three-fold characteristics of the world.'

Before we conclude this sermon today, let us very briefly indicate what the Buddha meant by the twelve-fold elaboration of the Four Noble Truths. These truths are unquestionably facts or realities which are believed to exist in the world. That in itself could hardly benefit anybody. Their meaning and their implications must be severally studied. Then and only then, i.e. after comprehending their identity, would one get an idea about their profitable and efficient utilization. They must become personally actualized in one's own life.

Thus each truth seems divisible into three phases. The first is the identification and understanding of the truth as it exists, and is called the *sacca* - phase. The second is the functional or utilization and is called *kicca* - phase. Finally this utilization must be successfully accomplished in one's own life. Then it comes to be called *kata* - phase. It is this multiple analytical and developmental process contained herein, which in its totality, the Buddha says, led to the perfection of his wisdom up to the required degree of becoming fully enlightened [*yāvakaivañca me bhikkhave imesu catusu saccesu evaṃ tiparivaṭṭaṃ dvādasākāraṃ ñāṇa-dassaṇaṃ suvisuddham ahoṣi*].

We shall now try to illustrate this to you, at a very down-to-earth level, with a sample study of the first truth of *dukkha sacca*. *Dukkha* - Let us face it. In our dealings and encounters in the world, all manner of disasters keep driving us continuously to discontent and dissatisfaction. In the world of humans, there is nothing strange in these situations. There is obviously no one in our midst who has not met them face to face.

But being heavily anaesthetized, with the world's worst desensitizer or stupefier called ignorance [i.e. *avijjā*], humans know neither the origin of the sting nor its intensity. Being thus drugged or doped or whatever one calls it, the average world-ling does not feel any need for change. That is why they continue to roll on in *Samsāra*. The origin of the sting, i.e. the cause of *dukkha* not being probed into, the humans thus continually run into situations of *dukkha* all their life



in their *Samsāric* continuance.

But *dhamma* insists that to be a successful pursuant of the path, with a keenness to gather its fruit without fail, one must diligently recognize *dukkha* as such and comprehend it to be what it is. This is the second stage of processing *dukkha sacca* personally in one's life. One must resolve with determination to comprehend it - *pariññeyyaṃ* as the sutta pus it. Once you have succeeded, jubilate over it with the words I have comprehended it - *pariññātaṃ*.

Try it out in your own life, with situations like death and disease, burglary and loss, censure and loss of reputation and discover it to be a real situation in your own life, with a sharp sting in the tail. But humans are more than adequately desensitized to feel and view these ever recurrent situations only as passing ones, fooling them all the time with alternating compensatory moments of relief. But the truth of Samsaric reality must necessarily disillusion you and expose you to the naked reality of *dukkha*. We have no doubt, that we would then be much nearer, with a gratifying sense of awareness, to the goal of Nirvana.

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DHAMMA in the Enrichment of one's LIFE. No. 4

## **Liberation in Nirvana**

### **How do we embark on this Journey?**

*Professor Dhammavihari Thera*

With an awareness of the presence of *dukkha* or dissatisfaction in one's life,

one could possibly be driven to a position of utter despair or much further, to total pessimism and surrender, To the uneducated or untutored average worldling, in such a deluded state of mind or *moha*, death might appear to be the only way out of it. Hence the alarming rate of increase of suicides in the world, and much more disturbing to us, in Sri Lanka. But the wisdom of Buddhism lies in its vision of a foreseeable termination of it [i.e. *nirodha*] or a way out of it [i.e. *nissaraṇa*], in the hands of the human individual himself. It is on this unassailable foundation that Buddhism as a source of comfort or a way of salvation is built.

Both *dukkha* and *nirodha* being agreed upon, the Buddha courageously pointed it out that this whole scheme of liberation of man in Buddhism depended entirely on himself. This is what comes to be enunciated in the fourth truth or *magga sacca*. It is termed the Noble Eight-fold Path.

Before we proceed any further to talk about this Buddhist scheme of salvation along the Noble Eight-fold Path, let us turn our attention to the overall religious culture in Buddhism which is referred to under the name of *sikkhā*. The word itself, derived from the verb *sikkhati*, means culture, training, or being disciplined. This *sikkhā* is spoken of as being three-fold, i.e. *sikkhattaya* or *tisso sikkhā*. It is three-tiered and is to be viewed as ascending upwards.

The preparatory ground level basis of this culture is grooming in moral soundness. This basic culture is referred to as *sīla*. It is the perfecting of harmonious man-to-man relationships as would be evident to any one, Buddhist or non-Buddhist who knows about *pañca-sīla* or *pansil*. Basically among these are respect for life, respect for the rightful ownership of property, respect for gender relationships etc. all of which the Buddha looked upon as necessary for the healthy growth of humans, fostering robust inter-personal relationships, well before the emergence of the human rights consciousness of the United Nations.

Any breach of these brings disaster upon the doer himself, because in doing so one puts oneself primarily in hostility with the community in whose midst one

lives. They bring both dread upon the doer [i.e. *bhaya*] and hostility against society [i.e. *vera*] which are said to be corrosive both here and hereafter. Society would here and now invariably call a person of such behavior a villain. As the books say *appahāya pañca-verāni dussīlo iti vuccati* [AN. III. 205]. His misguided foolish conduct would, without much doubt, lead to degeneracy in his life after death. *Kāyassa bheda duppañño nirayaṃ so upapajjati* [loc.cit].

The second item in this triple culture of *sikkhā* is *adhicitta-sikkhā* or culture of the mind. In the Buddha's own words 'One stands firm on moral stability in the development of one's religious or spiritual culture.' *Sīle patitthāya naro sapañño* [SN. I. 165] runs the oft-quoted refrain. It is after being established on this, that a Buddhist proceeds to the next higher level of mind-culture. Sitting down to mind culture in Buddhism requires some degree of preparatory moral soundness. All schools of Buddhism, everywhere, agree on this. The meditation mat or the seat on which one takes his solemn perch alone cannot bring about this required purge.

Whether one likes it or not, this implies the need for a Buddhist to circumscribe the territory in which one freely roams and feeds on in one's daily life. It requires a determined reduction of the involvement in and enjoyment of the pleasures the world is ever ready to offer to every one, man and woman, unmindful of the consequences they entail. Some modern psychologists of the western world now sponsor ideas like delay gratification and ageing and saging which the Buddhists in this part of the world would do well to reckon with. This accords very well with the *nekkhamma saṅkappa* of the Eight-fold Path which we shall take up for discussion in due course.

Now we shall take up for serious study the *maggā sacca* which is the last of this series of four truths. This is the way to the final bliss in Buddhism, namely *nirodha* or *Nibbāna* wherein the *Samsāric* journeying is ended, together with all its accompanying ills. In *Nibbāna*, there being no more birth, there is no more

decay, disease and death. Of it, we can therefore say *nibbaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ* [Dhp. v. 204], that Nibbāna provides the highest bliss.

This *magga sacca* is the Noble Eightfold Path or *Ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. As far as we understand and are competent enough to explain, it consists of eight successive stages, all of which from the first to the eighth, are said to lead from one to the other, to a more developed subsequent stage. Mark diligently and sensibly the statement in the reliably authentic texts which reads *sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṅkappo pahoti ...* etc. [DN. II. 217]. This means 'To him who has reached the stage or state of *sammā diṭṭhi* there arises the state of *sammā saṅkappa*.' With these really acceptable authentic texts before our very eyes, how can we ever present the *Aṭṭhaṅgika magga* as a rope of eight strands where all different stages are concurrently present?

Accepting this interpretation of successive stages for the *magga*, let us now begin with the very first one of *sammā diṭṭhi*. What one necessarily needs to get at the very outset of being initiated into Buddhism is this *sammā diṭṭhi* or a corrected vision about the new religion. This initiation through *sammā diṭṭhi* is referred to in the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta [DN. I. 46], in the words of Venerable Sariputta, as No. i. *ujugatā assa diṭṭhi*. This means his vision is corrected or straightened out. No. ii. is *dhamme aveccappasādena samannāgato*. This means one is endowed with deep-seated delight in the *dhamma*. No. iii. is *āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ* and it means one has gained entry or admission into the true doctrine.

See this very down-to-earth empiricist approach to the concept of *sammā diṭṭhi*. To disclose here the real identity of *sammā diṭṭhi*, let us refer to the Mahāvedalla Sutta [MN. I. 294] which states in no uncertain terms, in the words of the same Venerable Sariputta, in conversation with Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, that the two factors which generate *sammā diṭṭhi* are i. information through another [*parato ghosa*] and ii. precise analysis and examination of the same by

oneself [*yoniso ca manasikāro*]. We gladly concede.

At this stage, it is well worth questioning the sanity of the extra-modernist presentation of the three-fold religious culture of Buddhism which we have already discussed earlier as being *sīla samādhi paññā*, now being re-set and re-presented, without any approval or endorsement as *paññā sīla samādhi*. This reveals an apparent gross misunderstanding of the true connotation of *paññā* in Buddhism, thoroughly misled, no matter by whom.

We do unhesitatingly subscribe to the view that the wisdom needed for liberation out of *Samṣāra* which our authentic texts refer to as *paññā* and at times as *ñāṇa* is the product of a process of sustained development. This wisdom as *paññā* or *ñāṇa* is said to be attainable only on the successful completion of the immediately preceding state of *sammā samādhi* which is the final [i.e. the 8<sup>th</sup>] successive stage on the Eightfold Path [*sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇam pahoti*. DN. II. 217]. This, it may be argued, could be the product of one life time or essentially of a series which has preceded.

We are definitely reluctant to lend the Pali word *paññā* to refer to worldly wisdom of any sort. [Do whatever you like with the Sinhala word.] It has always to be transcendental. For it is this wisdom which leads one on to the final *Nibbānic* release or *vimutti* [*sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti*. loc.cit.]. From what has been said above, it becomes abundantly clear that this *paññā* we refer to here stands well outside the Eightfold Path, produced only after its completion. It also becomes equally clear that this *paññā* is the third and final item in the threefold *sikkhā* or *sikkhattaya* we have explained above.

It is delightful to find Therī Dhammadinnā's statement to her erstwhile husband Visākha that while the threefold *sikkhā* can contain within it the Noble Eightfold Path, the latter cannot contain the former. Here is the Cūlavedalla Sutta account from the Majjhima Nikāya [MN. I. 301] which records it in full. *Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā. Tīhi ca*

*kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo atthaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito.*

Thus, it is clear that *paññā* is, more or less, a full-bodied summit-level accomplishment, achieved at the end of a graduated process, aided by each preceding stage. Even *sammā samādhi* which heralds the dawn of *paññā* has seven preceding contributory factors [*satta samādhi-parikkhārā* DN. II. 216]. As for *sammā diṭṭhi*, it opens the door-way for entry into Buddhism. It is no doubt a stimulus which triggers off an intellect-bound pathway. This is evident from a study of the very next stage of No. 2 in *sammā saṅkappa*. Set in motion by the very first stage of *sammā diṭṭhi*, every Buddhist has to reorganize and reset his pattern of thinking or *saṅkappa*. Every Buddhist, in the true sense of the word, has to begin with a mind-set, organized according to instruction.

In conformity to the Buddhist ethos, every converted or convinced Buddhist has to begin with an endeavor to reduce his pursuit of pleasure. In terms of modern psychological thinking in the world, there has to be a deliberately willed delaying of gratification of sensory demands or responding to sensory stimulation. In Buddhism, this is the very first of the three *saṅkappas*. This is the *nekkhamma saṅkappa*. As its opposite stands *kāma saṅkappa* or pursuit of sensual delights.

Once these two are acquired and achieved, a newly-converted Buddhist [*āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*], we believe, is reasonably well established on the Buddhist path to liberation. He has to know that he has to think as a Buddhist and thereafter to act as a Buddhist. What truly matters here is not the fact of being born a Buddhist or being born a non-Buddhist. It is this choice and this acceptance in one's life, through the two preliminary stages of *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa* which pave the way to the growth, as a Buddhist, of the necessary wisdom or *paññā* for ultimate liberation or *vimutti*.

It is at this stage when one has necessarily to acquire a true sense of Buddhist sanity, and that through an awareness of Buddhist thinking or *dhamma*,

that one is called upon to act and live in the Buddhist way. Are we then surprised any bit that the following three items on the path, namely 3. correct speech [*sammā vācā*], 4. correct activity [*sammā kammanto*] and 5. correct mode of making a living [*sammā ājīvo*] which unmistakably encompass the entire range of activity of a householder are correctly placed here?

Are we asking too much of any man or woman who chooses to be a Buddhist for whatever reason, if we venture to say that this and this alone is the true ascending path in the direction of liberation in *Nibbāna*. Undeniably, it is a formidable challenge. It is an awareness of this reality, an awareness of the challenging nature of his teaching which in his own words is *paṭisotagāmī* or upward-moving, which made the Buddha openly express his conviction that it would not be possible for the average man of the world, steeped in greed and hatred as he is, to comprehend it.

This is what he thereupon said `Overwhelmed with greed and hatred, it shall be difficult for them to comprehend this teaching' [*rāga-dosa-paretehi nāyaṃ dhammo susambudho* [MN. I. 168]. This legend-arily expressed unwillingness of the newly enlightened Buddha to deliver his message to the world is built upon this observation. We are told that he said it would be of no use making known to the world the truths which he comprehended with utmost difficulty [*kicchena me adhigataṃ h'alam 'dāni pakāsitum*. loc.cit.].

At any rate, the message of Buddhism was delivered, and it was universally acclaimed that it shall for ever remain irreversible or *appati-vattiyam*. We have already witnessed how a man of the world, on realizing the true nature of the world via the teachings of Buddhism, regulates his life in order to minimize the corrosive effect which the very process of living has upon himself.

This early stage of Buddhist religious culture is and can be brought about by submitting oneself to an unostentatious organized pattern of living which goes under the name of *sīla*. It is of interest here to note that items 3, 4 and 5 of the

Noble Eight-fold Path virtually take care of this same territory. In the exercise of one's speech and action [i.e. *vācā* and *kammanta*], if adequate care and caution is taken, then one avoids slipping into danger zones of *akusala*, generated through greed, hatred and delusion. Here one sees the operation of *sīla-sikkhā* within the Path.

We wish to stress the point once again here that it is naturally facilitated by the effective operation of items 1 and 2 of the Path, namely corrected vision and corrected thought pattern [i.e. *sammā ditṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa*]. Proceeding therefrom, this honest and genuine correction of one's personal behavior, of word and deed, prompts one to accept a pattern of livelihood or *ājīva*, i.e. a way of making a living, which is acceptable and free from blame in terms of one's religious values.

Viewing it retrospectively, one's *ājīva* or way of making a living must not in any way infringe on the ethics of *pañcasīla*. It must not involve killing or aiding and abetting of it. It must not involve stealing, or any form of dishonesty like smuggling etc. So is it with trafficking in drugs or sale of alcohol. How very conveniently do people say that they do so for want of an alternative.

We are painfully aware that both religious institutions, under whatever brand name they exist in this country and the state, on whichever side they lean at the time of our reckoning, must step forward into this area of honorable living or *sammā ājīva* to arrest the unimaginable rot and the consequent stench that is prevalent in the country today.

It is our opinion that in the count down for the spiritual ascent on the Path, items 3, 4 and 5 discussed above, if well practiced and sincerely adhered to, are capable of pulling the layman out of his worldly moorings which keep the human tethered to all ensuing ills. It is one's thoughts of ceaselessly enjoying and entertaining the pleasures of the world which come within the periphery of *kāmā* which, like the gravitational pull of the earth, hinder our movement towards the



blissful release in Nirvana.

Like the satellites fired off a launch pad after a precise countdown at NASA, we believe the Buddhist disciple who has conscientiously journeyed passing the first five stages on the Path and reached the sixth one of *sammā vāyāmo* [i.e. corrected striving], is now, more or less, moving up on a transcendental ascent, having passed the earth-bound ground level, and having jettisoned all components of his earthly under-carriage which he once enjoyed.

At No. 6 or *sammā vāyāmo*, the disciple is all out for the correction and elimination of hindrances or *akusala* and acquisition of efficient supportive virtues or *kusala*. The corrected striving implied here at stage six is by no means the keenness to acquire building material for worldly structures like material prosperity such as better wages and higher positions. At No. 7 or *sammā sati*, we now witness the disciple's higher grade mind culture [i.e. virtually *adhicitta sikkhā*]. The four stages of establishing mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* is adequate proof of this. This leads, without fail, on to the final stage of the Path, namely *sammā samādhi*.

The Mahācattārisaka Sutta [MN. III. 76] tells us that the religio-cultural journey from the first stage of *sammā-dīṭṭhi* to the eighth one of *sammā-samādhi*, i.e. the Noble Eight-fold Path, is no more than the path-way or *paṭipadā* of the trainee [*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgato sekho paṭipado*]. It is on completing ten stages that one becomes an *arhant* [*dasahaṅga-samannāgato arahā hoti*].

To those who by now have some serious need to contemplate on the worth of the religio-cultural journey of Buddhism, we have only a very few items to indicate. Begin by seeking apprenticeship to know about this new religion. The idea of new religion applies equally well even to those who are born as Buddhists, on account of their parents or even grand parents.

Remember, one needs a certified [i.e. a certificated] teacher to play this role

of competent authority or *parato ghoso*, i.e. one from whom one gets the message of the *dhamma* or *saddhamma* so that you could be certified as having gained entry into it [*āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*]. You also should have the credentials yourself to examine it [*yoniso ca manasikāro*]. Take long enough to decide whether you choose to accept Buddhism or not.

Having accepted Buddhism as a way to live, now please start doing what you are called upon to do, i.e. to restructure and re-set your thinking the Buddhist way. We are sure you will not hesitate, having shown that you are already in possession of the pre-requisite of *sammā diṭṭhi* or corrected vision. You are now at the second stage of *sammā saṅkappa*. At this stage, the first item on the agenda is *nekkhamma saṅkappa* or the endeavour to reduce chasing after pleasures of the senses [i.e. those labeled, or even stigmatized, under the category of *kāma saṅkappa*]. We wish you luck and leave you at that.

